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A method for optimizing power management in the transmittal of a variable rate data transfer between two wireless stations, such as a Base Station Transceiver and a Mobile Station. This is achieved by determining the initial power and the initial signal-to-noise values based on the reliability of the transmission, the desired data transfer rate, the power required to transmit a fixed rate message, and the frame error rates. By the use of this invention, the capacity of a desired system and/or quality of a service provided by a desired system may be enhanced.